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Τῆς δὲ θεοπνευστῆς σοφίης λόγος ἔστιν ἄριστος. PHOCYL.

Best is that wisdom, which from Heav'n descends.

THE accustomed day of the publication of this Paper having fallen on the festival of CHRISTMAS, I will endeavour to amuse my Readers with an *ænigma* suited to the occasion. And I cannot but recommend it to all Masters and Mistresses of families to use it as a trial of the ingenuity of the young ladies and gentlemen under their care, and to present those, who are foremost in discovering the answer, with a set of THE COUNTRY SPECTATORS.

I am by birth a *Jew*. The æra of my nativity cannot be accurately ascertained, as I was not pro-

duced at once, but by continual accretions of matter, till at length I assumed my present form and magnitude. It may be sufficient to observe, that I number above three thousand years since the first appearance of any part of me on earth. I was sent into the world to be the guide and monitor of the nation, amongst whom I had my origin; but so little were my precepts regarded, that THE BEING, from whose Spirit I am an emanation, incensed at the perverse conduct of my countrymen, condemned them to a captivity of seventy years under a foreign potentate. During their residence in his territory, they insensibly lost the use of the *Hebrew* tongue, and learnt the *Chaldee*, the language of their conquerors. At the expiration, therefore, of the term of their captivity, when they had resolved in future to be more obedient to my commands, they were unable to discover the duties, which I enjoined: accordingly, Interpreters were employed; a race of men, from whom I have suffered greater wrongs, than from any other. There, instead of delivering to the people the plain precepts, which I had laid down to them, buried my meaning in voluminous comments, which few had leisure to consult or talents to understand, or else superseded my written laws by oral tradition, which soon lost all resemblance of its original.

In the course of a few centuries from the celebrated Captivity, I was for the convenience of a

Macedonian^d colony, who settled at *Alexandria*, taught the *Greek* language. I had ever been consulted by Philosophers and sages, as an oracle of wisdom. The ancients are supposed to have derived from me much of their mythology; and some have imagined, that the *Platonic* and *Aristotelian* systems are indebted for a great part of their excellence to my communications. But after I was rendered more generally intelligible, my words were quoted by the learned of every nation: and a *Greek* Critic, in particular, who lived several centuries after the epocha of my being taught a new tongue, commends the simple sublimity of my language in the most animated strains of approbation.

Hitherto, however, I had acted in a more confined sphere, than that, in which at my birth I was destined one day to move. The time was now at hand, in which I was to assume augmented importance, and to rule mankind with extended sway. The event, that occasioned this increase of my dignity, was my union with a *Christian*, who had from the earliest periods been fated to be my consort; an event, which may be said to have been accomplished exactly one thousand seven hundred and ninety-two years from the present day. Among my other endowments I had been gifted with that of prophecy; and I had predicted concerning my future companion, that she would be amiable, benevolent, of a forgiving temper, and renowned for her wisdom;

that she would unfold to mankind truths, of which they were as yet in utter ignorance, and that she would teach them the practice of such virtues, as would exalt human nature to the excellence of THE DIVINITY. These predictions were fully verified; and yet, strange as it may seem, the world received her with coolness or aversion; the rich and the great were disgusted with the humility of her appearance; whilst many could not endure to listen patiently to a monitor, who told them freely of their vices and follies, and who presented to them a lively picture of the woes and horrors, which threatened their depravity.

By degrees, however, she gained the respect due to her virtues; and I now came to be considered as the great director of the human conduct. My influence was gradually extended over a large part of the earth; and all, who regarded their present or future happiness, willingly obeyed my dictates. But eminence of situation naturally leads to calumny and abuse. As my fame increased and men became converts to the doctrines, which I inculcated, I was made the subject of dissensions and animosities among those, who pretending to be actuated by a zeal for my honour, were the slaves of ambition, hypocrisy and pride. My words, tho' I almost always addressed myself to people of common intellects, were generally misconstrued. Philosophers would distort my meaning to the support of

their theories ; logicians perplexed me by their subtilities and refinements ; and mystics perpetually endeavoured to cloud me with the obscurity of their own visionary ideas : I was again harrassed by a host of commentators, who exerted all their ingenuity to involve me in darkness, and by a crowd of Critics, who under the mask of impartiality compelled me to be subservient to their sordid designs.

By this time I had attained the knowledge of various tongues ; and I was accused of uttering different sentiments, according to the different languages, which I used. This misrepresentation arose from the carelessness, ignorance, or wilful fraud of my Interpreters ; who would often suppress my meaning, when it was adverse to the principles of the sect, to which they themselves belonged, and would put into my mouth absurd declarations, by which they defended their own religious tenets. Amidst these disputes, *Councils* and *Convocations* interposed their authority ; yet even these were sometimes blinded by prejudice, and, in some instances, were actuated by motives of fear or advantage. The Church, however, assured mankind that *it* alone was capable of explaining my precepts ; and as it used more terrible instruments of conviction than simple argument and plain reasoning, all were willing to concede to the Church the sole right of expounding the lessons, which I taught and enforced. A long period of darkness ensued ; and it was evident from the

practices of those, who professed to be my advocates and to understand my doctrines, that they regarded only their own aggrandisement, and would gladly sacrifice me to their unruly passions.

The time of my arrival in *Britain* cannot be ascertained. Suffice it to observe, that there are few countries, in which I have suffered greater hardships, or in which I have experienced a greater variety of fortune. About two centuries and a half from the present æra, the world began to emerge from the gloom of superstition, and an important reformation was effected in the opinions of mankind. At this period I had never been taught the *English* tongue, and consequently I was little understood by the body of the people. It was proposed, therefore, by some friends to the increase of moral and religious knowledge, that I should be rendered intelligible to the multitude, in order that they might be able to judge for themselves and be benefited by my admonitions; but it was argued on the other hand by those, whose interest it was to keep the people in darkness and ignorance, that I was a dangerous inmate to the unlearned and simple, and that it would tend much to the happiness of mankind, if I were still to address them in a language, which they did not understand.

These arguments, with all their absurdity, would, probably, have prevailed, had not a few good men

boldly pleaded my cause, and procured an edict that I should be taught the *English* language. Still however, I had many difficulties to contend with. One * of my enemies, unable to prevent the decree, proposed, that I should continue to speak certain *significant* words in *Latin*; and tho' his proposal was rejected, my advocates could not obtain me permission to converse freely with the Poor, to whom I was always particularly attached; but I was still suffered to be the associate of the rich and great alone, or of that body of men, who, in spite of their zealous professions, were most hostile to my welfare. I was, therefore, chained down in Churches, lest I should influence the opinions of the people; or if I was admitted into private houses, it was stipulated, that I should be consulted with the utmost caution and wariness.

Scarcely had I surmounted these obstacles, by being allowed to converse with all, who solicited my acquaintance, than I had to combat a numerous class of men, who began to call in question the legitimacy of my birth. Most of these persons were remarkable for an affectation of singularity, for exalted ideas of their own wisdom, or for the rancour and malignity of their hearts. They, therefore, assailed me with the shafts of ridicule, and exerted all their interest and talents to bring me into contempt; but the mischief, which they meditated, always re-

coiled on themselves, and their names are either forgotten, or are remembered with abhorrence.

Thus, have I traced my existence to the present moment. And can it be imagined, that after victories so often repeated and so many trials of my virtue, I should fail to attract general regard? Yes! In an age, in which my merits are acknowledged, I am frequently doomed to neglect. Tho' I am introduced into all families, I am employed chiefly in keeping a register of births and baptisms, or in teaching children the rudiments of language: sometimes indeed, I am consulted in the hour of sickness; but I am generally dismissed with the Physician!

Whoever is a well-wisher to the happiness of mankind, will gladly seize an opportunity of pleading my cause. He will tell the lovers of truth, that I was never convicted of a falsehood; he will assure the sorrowful and afflicted, that I will give them rest; and he will remind the vain, the proud and the conceited, that a certain sublime ^s Genius engaged me as the companion of his travels, and pronounced me the best of my species.

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To the Public.

Notes to the references will be given in the next N°.

The *pamphlet* addressed to the COUNTRY SPECTATOR came to hand whilst this N°. was in the press.